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SUBJECT: OFDA'S CONTRIBUTION IN BURKINA FASO RECOGNIZED

Summary. In its ongoing effort to enhance the government of Burkina Faso's capacity to address high rates of malnutrition, UNICEF donated vehicles, equipment and supplies valued at 525 million CFA (\$1.14 million) to the Ministry of Health (MOH) on 16 July. During his speech, the UNICEF Representative spoke about the scope and impact of child malnutrition and formally recognized the Embassy and USAID for funding nutrition programs through OFDA. When introducing USAID/OFDA's Acting Regional Advisor to the Minister of Health, UNICEF again emphasized USAID/OFDA's contribution to nutrition programs. Nutrition is the central pillar of USAID/OFDA's country strategy for Burkina Faso. End Summary

¶1. On the 16th of July, USAID/OFDA's Acting Regional Advisor attended a ceremony presided over by the Minister of Health where UNICEF turned over 18 vehicles and a large quantity of equipment and supplies to the MOH in order to help it detect malnutrition and treat cases of severe acute malnutrition. The total value of the transfer was estimated to be 525 million CFA (\$1.14 million).

¶2. During his speech, the UNICEF Representative, Herve Peries, emphasized the importance of addressing the serious problem of child malnutrition in Burkina Faso which results in an estimated 800,000 children being chronically malnourished and 280,000 children suffering acute malnutrition.

¶3. Peries also noted that malnutrition has serious implications for overall child health and mortality rates. Malnutrition plays a direct role in 35% of the deaths of children under five and it impacts children's ability to learn and gain the skills needed to be productive adults. This loss of productivity negatively impacts Burkina Faso's overall economic growth and development.

¶4. According to Peries, UNICEF's budget for malnutrition went from 500 million CFA (\$1.1 million) in 2006 to approximately three billion CFA (\$6.5 million) in 2008 and 2009. This increased funding has made possible programs to target severe acute malnutrition. These programs are now being established in health districts throughout the country.

¶5. Peries formally recognized USAID's funding for nutrition programs through OFDA and he also acknowledged the Embassy's efforts through OFDA and Food for Peace to improve overall nutrition in Burkina Faso. In addition, following the formal ceremony, he introduced USAID/OFDA's Acting Regional Advisor to the Minister of Health and again emphasized the support the U.S. government was providing for nutrition programs through USAID/OFDA.

¶6. The UNICEF Representative also noted that increased funding for malnutrition programs has been driven largely by the response to the food [price] crisis and that malnutrition is more than just a food issue. He further observed that current support for malnutrition programs comes largely from short-term, emergency funding and that in order to successfully address malnutrition in the long-term, a more stable source of funding is required from both donors and the GOBF.

¶7. In concluding his remarks, the UNICEF Representative again emphasized that good nutrition is an essential element in a country's development; he pointed out that a panel of experts,

including five Nobel Prize recipients, determined that efforts to reduce malnutrition were the best investments for development in terms of costs and benefits.

¶18. During follow-on remarks, the Minister of Health expressed the government's appreciation for UNICEF's donation. He also emphasized the importance that the GOBF places on nutrition and the efforts it was making to improve nutrition levels in Burkina Faso.

¶19. Comment: As recently as 2006, key officials in the MOH argued that malnutrition was not a problem that needed to be addressed. However, as the Minister's comments indicate, the MOH has changed its position.

¶10. Comment continued: Nutrition is the central pillar of USAID/OFDA's country strategy for Burkina Faso which has some of the highest rates of chronic and global acute malnutrition in Africa. In recognition of the impact that high food prices have on such vulnerable populations, USAID/OFDA's total funding for programs in Burkina Faso in FY2009 is \$8.9 million, making it the largest single USAID/OFDA country program in the region. All of USAID/OFDA's programs in Burkina Faso, with the exception of \$250,000 which was provided uniquely for the purchase of Measles vaccines, have a nutrition component.

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